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To
MR. BENBOW,
OF

The town of Manchester,

One of the English Reformers, now imprisoned in some prison in Great Britain, under a warrant of a Secretary of State, in virtue of an act, lately passed, lodging the absolute power of imprisonment in the hands of the Ministry.

LETTER II.

North-Hampstead, Long-Island,
September 26, 1817.

DEAR SIR,

Agreeably to the promise in my former letter, dated on the 1st of last month, I now proceed to develop my plan for assisting in the acquirement of *book-learning*, all those against whom the Boroughmongers have, in a great degree, closed the door to such learning, and whom they have the insolence to denominate the "*Lower Orders*." To effect this object it is my intention to publish, at a very *cheap* rate, though the word *cheap* may shake the nerves of Sidmouth and Canning to jelly; at a very cheap rate it is my intention to publish, FIRST; "an English Grammar, for the use of Apprentices, Plough-Boys, Soldiers, and Sailors." SECOND; "A History of the Laws and Constitution of England," for the use of the same description of persons.

THIRD; "A History of the Church and of Religion in England, in which will be seen the origin of the present *claims* of the Clergy, and in which their duties will also be shown," for the use of the same description of persons. FOURTH; "A view of the present state of the Income, Debt, and Expenses of the Kingdom; its Population and Paupers; its Causes of Embarrassment and Misery, and the means of Restoration to Ease and Happiness," for the use of the same description of persons.

These four works will form four distinct volumes, each volume to be sold separately. Indeed, they will be four books independent of each other; yet, all tending to the same great end, namely, the rendering of great numbers of the people a match, at least, in point of book-learning, to more than the average of "Noble Lords" and "Honourable Gentlemen;" and the price of the *whole four volumes* shall not exceed much more *than half* the amount of the tax which the labourer in England now pays upon *one single bushel of salt*; and this price shall not exceed the taxes which he now really pays upon *every twenty-five pots of beer that he drinks*.

It is my intention to publish the books in succession, one every three or four months, till the whole be completed, beginning with the GRAMMAR in January next. After this, the other books will follow to great advantage; and any young man, or boy, who shall

have read the whole of the four books through, and shall have made himself master of their contents, may fairly say, that he knows more than the average of those haughty and insolent men who now affect to regard the great mass of the people as a herd of half-barbarians. As the works themselves will be brief, it is my intention, as I proceed in the *three latter*, to refer to particular statutes, or official documents, or writings of authority; in order that those who have the leisure and other means, may enlarge their studies, as to these very important matters. If, then, I do not greatly deceive myself, we shall see, in spite of all the efforts of our enemies, a *public* more than a match for *legitimacy*. We shall have to contend with the great body of the Boroughmongers, their Magistrates, and their Clergy, and with all their numerous dependants; but their efforts, though aided by terror and by coaxing alternately, by blows and by patting, will fail in the end. Popular contempt will soon assail them from every quarter; and, you will please to bear in mind, that those who have withstood the effects of hatred for ages, have never failed to yield to general contempt. We have been attacking the citadel of Corruption by open assault. To accomplish our object by sap and mine may be more slow, but, as in most other cases, it will, from that very circumstance, be more *sure*. Here we may advance securely, and laugh at the shells and shot from the ramparts with which Corruption has surrounded herself. The balls of "*Sedition*," and the bombshells of "*Blasphemy*," invented by Sidmouth and Shepherd, and fired

from their pieces of prodigious caliber, attended by those able gunners, Oliver, Castles, and their fellows, will fly harmless over our heads, or spend their murderous force in the sands of our approaches. In the mean while, our attack by open assault must proceed with all its usual vigour; and thus, either we or our children shall make sure of the destruction of our and our country's foe, who is also the foe of freedom in every quarter and corner of the world.

The study of GRAMMAR is generally extremely *irksome*, and, for that reason, it is seldom, comparatively, prosecuted to complete success. But the attaining of this Art and Science, (for Grammar partakes of both,) being so very essential; it being the foundation of all book-learning, must be accomplished before we can, with any chance of final success, proceed beyond it. The irksomeness, too, arises, in a great degree, from the methods made use of in the teaching of Grammar. Men of real talent have seldom meddled with the subject. They have thought of it as a grown up man thinks of mother's milk and swaddling clothes; yet, there was a time when mother's milk and swaddling clothes were very necessary to him; and, not to feel some anxiety to see them provided for others, is to act a part not much unlike that of those foolish and unfeeling fathers who suffer unnatural mothers to drive their offspring to hireling breasts, and thus to rob them of that birth-right, to which, in their first tender accents, nature bids them put forward what she deems an irresistible claim, but which claim is frequently rejected, and by no persons in the

world more frequently than by those who have now the insolence to call the mass of the People of England the "*Lower Orders*."

The composing of GRAMMARS, that is to say, books to teach Grammar, has generally been performed by mere pedants; and, of course, the subject has been treated in a pedant-like manner. The scholar is, all of a sudden, introduced to a set of terms and epithets that he has never even heard of before. There is nothing of *common talk* to be seen. The author seems to take it for granted, that his book is to be studied by persons to whom his terms and definitions are already familiar. He *states*; he *lays down rules*; he says you must do this, and you must not do that. He never *reasons*; he has none of the *why* and the *wherefore*. Hence the puzzling, the wearisomeness, the disgust, of the scholar, who lays down the book in despair; and, if he once does this, all is over. He never takes it up again. Besides, the far greater part, if not the whole, of those who have written books upon this subject, have had *teachers* to assist them in the acquirement of *their* knowledge of Grammar. For this reason, however able their minds in the digesting of rules for others, they have never been led to contemplate sufficiently the nature and extent of the *difficulties* which the *solitary* or unassisted scholar experiences. In this respect I possessed, when I came to write my French Grammar, a peculiar advantage. I had learnt the English and then the French Grammar, without ever having seen the face of a teacher. My studies had been prosecuted amidst the woods and

snows of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and the time for them snatched by minutes from a greater quantity and variety of military and other duties than, I believe, were ever the lot of any other man living. As I proceeded, that which appeared a great difficulty a month back, appeared so plain, that I wondered at my recent stupidity; and, I saw, that if I had but a *teacher* at my elbow, just to say *one word* to me, my puzzling would not have been of a moment's duration. But, when I came to write my French Grammar, I remembered all these puzzle-wits, and, by dealing pretty largely in the *why* and the *wherefore*, I took care, in many instances, at least, that my scholar should be relieved from these disheartening stumbling blocks. And, indeed, this is what I see the French Editors of new editions of my Grammar particularly remark in commendation of it. They say, that I myself always *reason*, and that I thus *induce the scholar to reason*; that I am not content with his *memory*, but force him to give me the use of his *mind*.

This is very high praise, and higher, perhaps, than the work merits; but, to a certain extent, it is just; and hence it is, that this work, the production of a few weeks of the most busy and anxious part of my life, has obtained a higher reputation than any other work of the kind. At the time when I wrote it, I was incessantly occupied, during the day light in teaching French people English; and during a month out of the seven or eight weeks that I was engaged upon it, I seldom had my clothes off, being occupied with the hope, which, at last, proved vain, of saving the life of a then only child, and

having to assuage the grief of his young and most affectionate mother. There were these anxieties at home, while my scholars were importuning me, the bookseller and printer bothering me, and their devils haunting me, all the time that this grammar was writing. The event which I had been so anxious to prevent, made me disgusted with every thing; and to *finish* the grammar was the object, not to write as I was able to do it. I stopped at the part, where it was my intention to have taken great pains, and hurried on, as if *to get rid of a job*. And yet, this grammar, only because its ideas are simple, and because it appeals to the *reason* of the *scholar*, is esteemed beyond any other having the same object in view.

With my *English Grammar* I shall take much more pains. Indeed, I shall do all I can to render it complete. I actually began it, several years ago, for the use of my own children. It was to have been a series of letters to my eldest daughter, who was then about 13 or 14 years of age. I wrote some of the letters, and she copied them. But, before I had proceeded far, I found that she galloped away from me so fast, that rules of grammar were wholly unnecessary to her. She was a very good grammarian before I had advanced into the middle of my work. I had opened the gate so fairly for her, and had shown the way so clearly, that she was at the end of her journey in a very short space of time without any more of my assistance.— This same matter, as far as it went, I shall now, perhaps, recast into another form. But the *form* is of little consequence. The *principles* are eternally

the same; and it is the making of these *clear* and of *easy comprehension* that is the only object worthy of great care in such an undertaking. But, I should observe here, that, whatever I may be able to do in this way, *patience* will be necessary in the pursuit of the study; for, to *half* learn any thing is worse than the knowing nothing at all about it. **PRINTERS** have generally that sort of knowledge of grammar which makes them very troublesome, if not mischievous. They do not know the *principles*; and, they often take upon them to *correct* the author, which is quite dreadful work. They have no need (as to their *trade*) to know any thing about the matter; and their thinking that they know *all* about it, very often produces great mischief, especially if they have the presumption to become "*correctors*." This puts me in mind of an error (a mere literary error) in the printing of the last Register at New York. It is in page 616. It is there said, that the French word *couvert* means to *sit* over eggs. But, it should have been the French word, *couver*. I mention this here, in order to show how easy it is to make nonsense of sense by the mere addition, or omission of a single letter; and also to show, that in passing through the press (especially when the author has not the means of correcting the press.) errors will inevitably occur.

"A little learning is a dangerous thing," one of our Poets has said; that is to say, a little portion of that, which, to be useful, a man must know the whole of. As, for instance, in the shoe-making line, it would be very dangerous for a man to learn *half* how to cut

out a shoe, and then to begin cutting and hacking away upon a fine large skin or hide. But, the insolent men, who call us the "*Lower Orders*" have cooked up this saying of this justly celebrated Poet so as to apply it to the mass of the people, who are to know *nothing*, because they do not know Latin and Greek; and who yet, at the same time, are making such a senseless noise about *educating*, as they call it, the children of the poor! It is a dangerous thing to learn a *little* of grammar, because that little can be of no use, while it gives the conceit of knowing the whole. But, to know the whole of grammar is, as I shall more clearly show presently, of wonderful use; and to acquire this knowledge there will need nothing but the *leisure time* of an apprentice, or of a plough-boy, for one year at the most, supposing him to be of common natural capacity.

To convince you of the great use of this branch of knowledge, or learning, I have only to relate to you its effects with regard to myself. It is clear, that without it, I never could have done what I have done as a *writer*; but, I will show you how it affected me in other walks of life. When I was sixteen years old, I was seized with the resolution to go abroad somewhere or other. The ready way to effect this purpose without money, of which I had none, was to become a sailor, or a soldier in a regiment serving abroad. I, at first, chose the former, and went, just at the close of the American war, to offer myself on board the *PEGASUS*; at Spithead, commanded by Captain, now Admiral, *BERKELEY*. He rejected me, and as he said,

I believe very sincerely, out of compassion to me. I have known Admiral Berkeley since, and the first time I saw him as a politician, I reminded him of the adventure, at which we had a most hearty laugh. The Admiral has since been engaged in scenes which render him not very popular in America. But, for my part, I always have thought him a most worthy man, and sincerely devoted to the honour and welfare of his country. I then enlisted into the 54th Regiment, which was serving in Nova Scotia, and which I joined the following year. Soon after I had enlisted, a young gentleman in London, who had taken great notice of me during my residence there, upon being informed by me of what I had done, began his answer to me in somewhat these words: "Now, then, my dear Bill, it is for you to determine, whether you shall, all your life, yield an abject submission to others, or whether you yourself shall be a guider and leader of men. Nature has done her part towards you most generously; but, her favours will be of no avail without a knowledge of grammar. Without that knowledge you will be laughed at by blockheads: with it you may laugh at thousands who think themselves learned men." The letter was long, full of urgent recommendation, and seasoned with the kindest of expressions. All which I knew to be sincere. I was, at that time, much more intent upon the beauty of my cap and feather than any thing else; but, upon seeing my friend afterwards to take leave of him, he renewed his advice in such a strain as to make a thorough impression upon me; and I set about my study in good earnest. When

I saw him again in 1806, long after my return from the United States to England, and after he had been an Envoy to two or three foreign courts, what a space to look back upon! what a series of events in both our lives! What a change! And, in tracing the growth of my powers back to their root, I came to his kind advice to study grammar. This gentleman was Mr. BENJAMIN GARLIKE, who was last, I believe, Envoy at Copenhagen, and who died a few years ago. Our politics when we met did not accord; and though he retained all the kindness and all the virtue and integrity of his youth, he had lost all its vigour. He had lived so long in courts, had so long had to do with superior power, and had so long lived in submission to the mandates of others, that he became nervous when he heard my ordinary talk about men in place and authority. But he was a most kind and virtuous man, and to his advice I owe all I have ever possessed beyond the lot of a common soldier.

When I came to my regiment, I soon found the use of my knowledge of Grammar, of which I found all my *superiors* wholly ignorant. I was first Clerk to the Regiment. The accounts and letters of the Paymaster went through my hands; or, rather, I was the maker of them. All the Returns, Reports, and other official Papers were of my drawing-up. Then I became the Sergeant Major to the Regiment, which brought me in close contact, at every hour, with the whole of the *Epaulet* gentry, whose profound and surprising ignorance I discovered in a twinkling. But, I had a very de-

licate part to act with these gentry; for, while I despised them for their gross ignorance and their vanity, and hated them for their drunkenness and rapacity, I was fully sensible of their power, and I knew, also, the envy which my sudden rise over the heads of so many old sergeants had created. My path was full of rocks and pit-falls; and, as I never disguised my dislikes, or restrained my tongue, I should have been broken and flogged for fifty different offences, given to my supreme Jack Asses, had they not been kept in awe by my inflexible sobriety, impartiality, and integrity; by the consciousness of their inferiority to me, and by the real and almost indispensable necessity of the use of my talents. First, I had, by my skill, and by my everlasting vigilance, eased them of all the trouble of even *thinking* about their duty; and this made me their master; a situation in which, however, I acted with so much prudence, that it was impossible for them, with any show of justice, to find fault. They, in fact, resigned all the discipline of the Regiment to me, and I very freely left them to swagger about, and to get roaring drunk out of the profits of their pillage, though I was, at the same time, making preparations for bringing them to justice for that pillage, in which I was finally defeated by the protection which they received at home.

To describe the various instances of their ignorance, and the various tricks they played to disguise it from me, would fill a volume. It is the custom in Regiments to give out *Orders* every day from the officer Com

manding. These are written by the Adjutant, to whom the Sergeant Major is a sort of Deputy. The man, whom I had to do with, was a keen fellow, as far as his interest went, but wholly illiterate. The Orders which he wrote, most cruelly murdered our mother tongue. But, in his absence, or, during a severe drunken fit, it fell to my lot to write Orders. As we both wrote in the same book, he used to look at these. He saw *commas*, *semi colons*, *colons*, *full-points*, and *paragraphs*. The questions he used to put to me, in an obscure way, in order to know *why* I made these divisions, and yet, at the same time, his attempts to disguise his object, have made me laugh a thousand times. As I often had to draw up statements of considerable length, and as these were so much in the style and manner of a *book*, and so much unlike any thing he had ever seen before in man's hand writing, he, at last, fell upon this device: he made *me* write, while he pretended to *dictate*! Imagine to yourself me sitting, pen in hand, to put upon paper the precious offspring of the mind of this stupid curmudgeon! But, here, a greater difficulty than any former arose. He that could not *write* good grammar, could not, of course, *dictate* good grammar. Out would come some gross error, such as I was ashamed to see in my hand writing. I would stop; suggest another arrangement; but, this I was, at first, obliged to do in a very indirect and delicate manner. I dared not let him perceive that I saw, or suspected, his ignorance; and, though we made sad work of it, we got along without any very sanguinary assaults upon mere

grammar. But, this course could not continue long; and he put an end to it in this way: he used to tell me *his story*, and leave me to put it upon paper; and thus we continued to the end of our connection.

He played me a trick upon one occasion which was more ridiculous than any thing else, but which will serve to show how his ignorance placed him at my mercy. It will also serve to show a little about Commissioners, sent out by the government. There were three or four Commissioners sent out to examine into the state of the Provinces of Nova-Scotia and New-Brunswick. Their business was of a very extensive nature. They were to inquire into the numbers of the people, the extent of their settlements, the provisions expended on them, and a great variety of other matters. Upon all these several heads they were to make a *Report*, and to subjoin to it a detail in figures. It required great ingenuity to frame these tables of figures, to bring the rude and undigested materials under general heads, dividing themselves into more particular sections, and these again subdividing themselves, and so on, and showing, at last, a sort of total, or result of the whole. To frame this appendix to the Report and to execute it in any moderate space of paper required a *head*, an *eye*, and a *hand*; and to *draw up the Report itself* was a task of a still superior order. The Commissioners, the name of one of whom was *Dundas*. Who, or what he was besides, I know not; and I have forgotten the names of the rest. But, they closed their work at FREDERICKTON, in New Brunswick, where I was

with my regiment. As the arrival of every stranger was an excuse for a roaring drunk with our heroes, so this ceremony now took place. But, the Commissioners had their *Report* to make. And, what did my ass of an adjutant do *but offer to do it for them!* They who, in all likelihood, did not know how to do it themselves, took him at his word; and, there was he in the sweetest mess that ever vain pretender was placed in. He wanted to get some favour from these commissioners, and he relied upon me not only to perform the task, but to keep the secret. But then, the part he had to act now was full of difficulty. The report of these fellows was no concern of mine. It could not, by any contrivances, be hooked in amongst my *duties*. He, therefore, talked to me at first, in a sort of ambiguous manner. He said, that the commissioners wanted him to do it, and d—n them, he would not do it for them. Then, when I saw him again, he *asked* me something about it, showing me their rude mass of papers, at the same time. I now began to find what he would be at; but, I affected not to understand him, turned the matter, as soon as I could, and so we parted. At this time I had long been wanting to go and see an old farmer and his family, and to shoot wild pigeons in his woods; and, as the distance was great, and a companion on the journey necessary, I wanted a sergeant to go with me. The leave to do this had been put off for a good while, and the adjutant knew that I had the thing at heart. What does he do now, but come to me, and after

talking about the Report again, affect to lament, that he should be so much engaged with it, that there was no hope of my being permitted to go on my *frolick till he had finished the Report*. I, who knew very well what this meant, began to be very anxious for this *finishing*, to effect which I knew that there was but one way. Tacked on to the pigeon-shooting, the Report became an object of importance, and I said, "*perhaps I could do something*," Sir, in putting the papers in order "for you." That was enough. Away he went, brought me the whole mass, and, tossing them down upon the table, "There," said he, "do what you like with them; for, d—n the rubbish, I have no patience with it." Rubbish it really was, if we looked only at the rude manner of the papers; but the matter would, to me, at this day, have been very interesting. I d—d the papers as heartily as he did, and with better reason; but, they were to bring me my week's frolick, and, as I entered into every thing with ardour, this pigeon-shooting frolick, at the age of about 23, was more than a compensation for all the toil of this report and its appendix. To work I went, and with the assistance of my shooting-companion sergeant, who called over the figures to me, I had the appendix completed in a rough draft in two days and one night. Having the detail before me, the report was a short work, and the whole was soon completed. But, before a *next copy* was made out, the thing had to be shown to the commissioners. It would not do to show them *in my hand-writing*. The adjutant got over

this difficulty by *copying the report*; and, having shown it, and had it highly applauded, "well then," said he, "here, sergeant-major, *go and make a fair copy.*" This was the most shameless thing that I ever witnessed. This Report and Appendix, though I hated the job, were, such was my habit of doing every thing well, executed with so much neatness and accuracy, that the Duke of Kent, who afterwards became Commander in Chief in those provinces, and who was told of this Report which was in his office at Halifax, had a copy of it made to be kept in his office, and carried the original with him to England as a curiosity, and of this fact he informed me himself. The Duke, from some source or other, had heard that it was I who had been penman upon this occasion, though I had never mentioned it to any body. It drew forth a great deal of admiration at Fredericton, and the Lieutenant-Governor, General CARLETON, asked me, in plain terms, *whether it was I who had drawn up the Report.* The Adjutant had told me, that I *need not say* but it was he, *because* he had promised to do it himself. I was not satisfied with his logic; but, the pigeon-shooting made me say, that I certainly would say it was done by him, if any one should ask me. And I kept my word with him, for, as I could not give the question of the Governor the *go-by*, I told him a lie at once, and said it was the Adjutant. However, I lied in vain; for, when I came to Halifax, in my way from the United States to England, *ten years* afterwards, I found that the real truth was known to a number of persons, though the thing

had wholly gone out of my mind; and, after my then late pursuits, and the transactions of real magnitude, in which I had been concerned, I was quite surprised that any body should have attached any importance to so trifling a thing.

What I remember of the report itself, enables me to say, that it was short; that it placed a great number of topics very briefly in a very clear light; that the transitions were natural and easy; that the style was precise; and the distribution uncommonly judicious. I remember that I was myself very much pleased with it, and that this pleasure, together with the party of pigeon-shooting, made up the whole of the reward that I either received, expected, or wished for.

I have gone into detail as to this anecdote in order to show what power a knowledge of grammar gives to man. During the whole of my military, I owed even my safety to it; and it is that, and that alone, which enabled me to pursue and acquire knowledge of a higher order; and, every young man, who shall read what I am now writing, may be assured, that he can never arrive at fame; that he can never obtain and retain any great degree of influence over the minds of other men, unless he be possessed of this branch of knowledge; which, as I said before, though *in itself* contemptible, is the key to all the means of communicating our thoughts to others. It is by the possession of this knowledge, that, sitting here in Long Island, I am able to tell you, in England, what I think; and it is the possession of this, by me, that has driven the Boroughmongers to those acts of desperation, which will end in their ruin. It is very true, that *all* men are not born with the same degree of capacity for acquiring knowledge. But, nature has been too fair to give all the capacity to the aris-

tocracy. The honest dame has done no such thing ; for, amongst all the renowned men, how very few have sprung from that order ! I remember the close of a French stanza, of which, on account of its beauty, I am sorry I have forgotten the former part :

De vingt Rois que l'on encense
Le trépàs brise l'autel ;
Mais Voltaire est immortel ;

which means this : “ Of a crowd of kings, “ to whom the world are now offering up “ incense, death dashes the altar to pieces ; while that of Voltaire will stand “ for ever.” And thus it is in the reality ; genius is as likely to come out of the cottage as out of the splendid mansion, and even *more* likely ; for, in the former case, nature is unopposed at the outset. I have had, during my life, no little converse with men famed for their wit, for instance ; but, the most witty man that I ever knew was a private soldier. He was not only the most witty, but *far* the most witty. He was a Staffordshire man ; he came from WALSALL, and his name was JOHN FLETCHER. I have heard from that man more bright thoughts of a witty character, than I have ever heard from all other men, and than I ever read in all the books that I have read in my whole life. No coarse jokes, no puns, no conundrums, no made up jests, nothing of the *college* kind ; but real, sterling sprightly wit. When I have heard profligate sayings of SHERIDAN, and have heard the House of Commons roaring at his green-room trash, I have always thought of poor Jack Fletcher, who, if he could have put his thoughts upon paper, would have been more renowned than Butler or Swift.

This was a gift of nature in Jack Fletcher ; but, though men are rarely so very highly gifted, it is not to a few,

either positively or comparatively, that the capacity of acquiring of great knowledge is confined. Indeed, it is not the acquirement of knowledge which, in the present case, is so much wanted. It is simply the capacity of *communicating that knowledge to others*. Jack Fletcher's wit, for instance, went no further than his red-coated circle. But, if he had my capacity of putting his thoughts upon paper, he would soon have made the world participate in our pleasure.— How many men of powerful minds, of an abundance of original conception, of most profound knowledge of character, die without leaving a trace behind them, and without producing but little effect during their lives, merely for want of knowing the method of placing words in a sentence ! Almost every father and mother wish their children to know something of *arithmetic*. Very right. But words are still more necessary than figures. If only a fiftieth part of the time, which young people spend in studying about the stars, were spent in learning how to speak and write correctly, what a difference would soon be perceived !

For the want of a competent knowledge of grammar, what uneasiness do men feel, when they come to be rich, or to have correspondences to carry on ! They are always in *doubt*. What they write is by hazard correct, and they have not the pleasure, even then, to *know* that it is so. There is no age, to which this study is unfit, and at which it cannot be prosecuted with success ; of the truth of which remark I will here give an encouraging instance. While our regiment lay at St. JOHN, in New Brunswick, there was a company of artillery, also, at the same place. It sometimes happened, that their non-commissioned officers had to come with their book to copy into it some orders, which our commanding officer gave out for the observance of the whole gar-

rison, he being, at such times, the senior in command. Upon one of these occasions, a bombardier, whose name was HOWIE, so came with his book. I happened to cast my eye into the book, and seeing there an order, written in shockingly bad English, asked the bombardier who it was that had written it; and, it is curious enough, that it was that very Mr. BLOOMFIELD, who is now that very Sir Benjamin, who is a prime favourite at Carlton House, and a very worthy member of another House, not less justly viewed by the people of England; and which Mr. Bloomfield was then a second lieutenant of artillery, and, as was said, a most capital player on the bass viol, or the fiddle, I forget which. The bombardier was surprized to hear me say, that the man who wrote that order was an illiterate fellow. He had perceived nothing wrong in it. But, when I explained to him *how* it was wrong, and that there were the means at hand of being *certain* as to such matters, he was seized with a desire to acquire that knowledge himself. He was a steady, sober Scotchman of 35 years of age, I suppose. He went that very day and bought him an essay on grammar; he came to me to explain difficulties to him; and in less than six months, he was far less likely to commit a grammatical error, than one half of the Doctors of Divinity, with all their Latin and Greek. At my leaving St. John, he wrote me a letter of thanks, which I kept for a long while as a specimen, not only of *correct*, but also of powerful and elegant writing. There was one of our Sergeants, whose name was SMALLER, and who was a Yorkshireman, who began learning his A, B, C, and who, at the end of a year, was as *correct* a writer as I ever saw in all my life. He was about my own age; he was promoted as soon as he could write and read; and well he deserved

it, for he was more fit to command a Regiment than any Colonel or Major that I ever saw. He was strong in body, but still stronger in mind. He had capacity to dive into all subjects. Clean in his person, an early riser, punctual in all his duties, sober, good-tempered, honest, brave, and generous to the last degree. He was once with me in the dreary woods, amongst the melting snows, when I was exhausted at night-fall, and fell down, unable to go farther, just as a torrent of rain began to pour upon us. Having first torn off his shirt and rent it in the vain hope of kindling fire by the help of his pistol, he took me upon his back, carried me five miles to the first dwelling of human being, and, at the end of his journey, having previously pulled off his coat and thrown it away, he had neither shoe, nor stocking, nor gaiter left; his feet and legs were cut to pieces, and covered with blood; and the moment he had put me down, and saw that I was still alive, he burst into a flood of tears that probably saved his own life; which, however, was then saved only to be lost in Holland, under the Duke of York. How often has my blood boiled with indignation at seeing this fine, this gallant, this honest, true-hearted and intelligent young man, standing with his hand to his hat, before some worthless and stupid sot of an officer, whom nature seemed to have designed to black his shoes! And, does not the English army contain many a SMALLER now? O, yes! and, it is my duty to endeavour to afford all of them the same assistance that I afforded him. But, now, the Boroughmongers have fallen upon a scheme to shut the door of promotion, beyond the rank of *non-commissioned* officer, against all the soldiers and sailors. They have formed what they call military and naval *Academies* and *Colleges*; or, in other words, large Bar-

rack Schools, where their sons, or those of their dependants, are drilled and schooled for the express purpose of being officers, and where, from their entrance, at 10 years of age, they wear a military or naval uniform. As vacancies happen in either service they are filled from these precious seminaries, where the boys have been *bred up* to have *no feeling in common with the people at large*. This is the German mode. It is the mode of all despotic governments. And there is no doubt in my mind, that these institutions arose out of a settled design to introduce a Military Despotism in England. But, see how it affects the common soldier and sailor! Sir WILLIAM FAWCET, so long the Adjutant-General, had been a private soldier; so had General SLATER of the Guards; so had General PICTON, the uncle of Sir THOMAS PICTON; and so had hundreds of commissioned officers twenty or thirty years ago. This is all now at an end. In the navy, several very distinguished officers had come from before the mast; amongst these were Lord COLLINGWOOD and Admiral HOLLOWAY. But, now no sailor can possibly rise in this way. The regulations now render such rise impossible. Is not this an *innovation*? The Boroughmongers talk of *innovations*. They are *afraid* of innovations! What do they call this? I call it a most unjust and malignant attack upon the rights and liberties of the mass of the people. Men may perform prodigies of valour in battle; but the honour is all to be given to the creatures of the Boroughmongers, who are *bred up* to be officers, in the *legitimate* academies! And Sergeant SMALLER and I, if we were still in the army, should have to obey some of the *poor*, scurly, pale-looking, Molly-built things that I have seen walking about Blackwater-Heath!

Oh, no! This can never last long;

but, in the mean while, let me endeavour to instruct the Soldiers and Sailors in the acquiring of that sort of knowledge which enabled me to laugh at my sots. There was a midshipman tried on board the QUEEN CHARLOTTE, at Portsmouth, a few days ago. It was in the fall, I think, of 1815. This vagabond had *deserted*, during the last war, some where about the Capes of Delaware, whither he had been sent with some men in a small vessel, as a cartel, under the command of a Lieutenant. He and his sailors set off, as soon as they got on shore, and left the Lieutenant to get back as he could. After the war was over, the scape-gallows went to Halifax and gave himself up to Admiral Griffiths, who sent him home to be tried for his life; and, tried he was, found guilty, and *condemned to be hanged*. I was present at the trial, and the *defence* was, that the chap was an *idiot*; and his uncle, who is a London Clergyman of the Church of England, proved *upon oath*, that the boy had *always* been a *half-idiot*, and that, being found not to have *sense enough for any profession or business*, he was *got into the navy* through the interest of Sir WILLIAM CURTIS! The parson was not asked, whether he repaid Sir WILLIAM by his vote and interest at elections. It would have been a shame to hang the poor idiot; and, through the same interest his *free pardon* was obtained! It is unnecessary to mention names; but, I was present at the trial, the record of which any Member of Parliament may find by application at the Admiralty.

Was not this a pretty fellow to *command men*? A pretty fellow to maintain discipline, to have the safety of a ship and the lives and happiness of brave men at his mercy! Yet, had the rap not *deserted*, who knows but Sir William might, in time, have made him an *admiral*! Here we come again back to the old *accursed*

cause; the root of all England's evils. It was the *interest* of Sir William; it was the Parson's *votes*; it was the corruption of elections, and the *want of a Reform*, that put this half-ideot and deserter into command in the Navy. It is in vain for the Boroughmongers to affect to hope for the preservation of their power. The curse must be got rid of! This ideot was made an officer, *because* he was a fool; because he was unfit for any profession or trade; and these were the very words of his uncle the parson. The object was to save the rascal's *neck*. The shame of making this acknowledgment was felt, I dare say; but, the shame of having one of the family *hanged* would have been still greater. The proof of the ideocy did not rest upon mere verbal testimony. Letters of the blackguard were produced, which corroborated the uncle's assertions. This affair only brought to light *one instance* out of, perhaps, hundreds. And thus the thing goes on, heaping all power, all authority, all emolument, upon the Boroughmongers and their vile, or imbecile dependants.

However, let us, when they have the insolence to call us the "LOWER ORDERS," prepare ourselves with useful knowledge, and let these insolent wretches marry one amongst another, till, like the Jews, they have all one and the same face, one and the same pair of eyes, one and the same nose. Let them, if they can, prevent their footmen from bettering their blood, and from reinforcing the limbs of their rickety race; and, let us prepare for the day of their overthrow. They have challenged us to the combat. They have declared war against us. They have resorted to falsehood, fraud, and every thing that is base in order to keep us their slaves. They have an *army*, they boast. And, who is this army composed of? why, of the brothers and

sons of that same people, of those very "LOWER ORDERS," whom they affect to consider as a sort of brutes! So, here are one *part* of the "Lower Orders," whom they treat with respect, at any rate. And, do they think that this will serve their turn for ever? Do they think, that *this part* of the "Lower Orders" have neither eyes to see, ears to hear nor hearts to feel? Do they think, that a red coat changes the inward as well as the outward man? Do they think, that making it *death*, almost to *talk* to a soldier will tend to inspire the soldiers with zeal in their cause? The boroughmongers must give us our rights, or they must, as I told my LORD FOLKESTONE, hang their very title deeds upon the point of the bayonet; and, then, let them recollect, that that bayonet is, after all, wielded by the "Lower Orders." Let them recollect this, and live as quietly, and as comfortably as they can; or, if any additional recollection be wanted, let them bear constantly in mind, that the tyrant James the Second, was not driven away by speeches, and votes of the great, but by the *shout* of his own *English army*; heard at St. James's, from Hounslow Heath, and expressing the *army's joy*, at the *acquittal of men tried for libel*! Let them bear this in mind, and then let them live and enjoy their unlawful power as tranquilly as they can.

Our struggle *may* be long; let us, then, make the result sure. We were, and are quite willing to enjoy only our bare rights; but, these we shall have, and the way to make sure of them, is to begin directly at the foundation of all book-learning, and to enable great numbers of the young and ardent minded men to acquire a competent knowledge of it. Suppose, that, during the first year, we instruct to this extent, only three or four at Norwich, ten at Bristol, five at Notting-

ham, a dozen at Manchester, and so on, with one or two in each regiment. Why, the effect of this alone would be very great; and this is really nothing at all in comparison of what we shall effect. I will take special care that no scoundrel hypocrite shall be able to call my book *seditions* or *blasphemous*. It shall allude neither to politics nor religion. So that nothing short of a direct *censorship*; a downright *Bourbon* censorship; nothing short of this shall impede its progress; for, it would be hard indeed to flog a soldier or sailor *for studying grammar*! unless, indeed, this should come under that copious head of "all other crimes not mentioned in the foregoing articles." The commanding officer might, indeed, give out an *order* against reading COBBETT'S grammar, and then flog the readers for "*disobedience of orders*," which is also a very copious head. However, I defy them to put out the light, if I live to kindle it.

There is no stronger instance of the disadvantage arising from a want of a knowledge of grammar than is seen, by those who know him, in Mr. WAITHMAN. He is a man greatly gifted by nature. Has a mind clear and strong and ingenious. He is naturally eloquent; bold from long habit of public speaking as well as from the possession of real courage; has an excellent voice, is quick at perceiving, and ready at expressing. He passes for a man of great talents, and, he is a man of great talents. Yet, whenever Mr. WAITHMAN has to reduce any thing to *paper*, he is not only greatly embarrassed; he is not only in a state of uncertainty, as to correctness; but, as must inevitably be the case, he is almost sure to be incorrect. And not only incorrect as to mere grammatical construction and orthography; but, if the writing be of any considerable length, and, if the arrangement be such

as to make subsequent parts have a relative grammatical effect upon former parts, he often *says what he does not mean to say*; or makes the whole a *jumble of nonsense*. About five years, or six years ago, there was a petition, or address, drawn up by him and passed at common hall. I forget the particular occasion now; but, when I saw the document, the next day, in the London papers, I could not help observing to a gentleman, who was with me, how very incorrect it was, and how clearly it said in reality, in one place, at least, precisely the *contrary* of what its author wished to say. In a few days afterwards, up came an Oxford paper, I think it was, with a literary criticism upon this piece of composition, which was mauled all to atoms, and yet which was really not unfairly treated. Only one half year's study of grammar would, perhaps, have made Mr. WAITHMAN as much superior to this critic in that branch, as, I dare say, he was in real powers of mind. There have been many occasions, I am sure, when the difficulties arising from this deficiency have induced Mr. Waithman to leave undone, or, at least, to delay, things which he was convinced ought to be done at once. It creates a dependence, a diffidence; it cripples; it benumbs. In short, grammar is, as I said in my former letter, the *linch-pin*. It is a trifle in itself, but, without it, it is unsafe for the coach to move a single yard.

Those who want the "*Lower Orders*" to believe in *ghosts* and in the *predictions of Moore's Almanack*, also would fain have us believe, that, though to know the grammar of our own language is very useful, still, that it is not to be come at so easily at any rate, as through the means of learning the Latin language first! Bombadier Howie and Sergeant Smaller and I, stood in no need of this Latin language.

If this were the case, how comes it, that these Latin scholars often write very bad English, as I shall, another time, have occasion to prove? But, the notion is so false, that a very few remarks will exhibit it to the contempt of every one who reads.

The *main principles* of grammar, being founded in nature, are, and must be, the same in all languages, in the like manner as the principles of the lever, and other mechanical powers, are the same in all sorts of machines. But, because this is so, would any man, who wanted his son to know how to make a pole to pull up a well-bucket, think it necessary to have him first taught how to construct a splitting-mill? The main principles are the same, but the several parts of the machinery, in the Latin and English languages, are wholly different. The nouns in Latin vary their endings many times; ours never but once. The former include in them the meaning of our articles and prepositions; we have articles and prepositions, in distinct and separate words. Then the place of the words in the sentence is wholly different in the two languages. An instance taken from the the French language will make this matter very plain. The French verbs vary their terminations or endings, about thirty times; ours only four times. Let us take the verb *to work*, which, in French, is *travailler*.

ENGLISH.	FRENCH.
To work,	Travailler,
I work,	Je travaille,
Thou workest,	Tu travailles,
He works,	Il travaille,
We work,	Nous travaillons,
You work,	Vous travaillez,
They work,	Ils travaillent.

There are about twenty other changes in this French word, while our word *work* always continues the same, or becomes *worked* to express what is passed; and, then, you see, we have the little word *to* before our verb at the outset; whereas the French include the meaning of that little word in the word *travailler*. Now, in order for me to under-

stand English grammar, can it be necessary for me to understand the French language? Why, then, should it be necessary for me to understand the Latin language, which, in both its constituent and relative parts is ten times more unlike ours than the French language is? No: the big-wigs do not, I believe, say, that it is absolutely necessary; but, that the having learnt the Latin language renders the learning of English grammar more easy. No doubt, that the man who has learnt to erect a splitting-mill will put a pole to pull up a well-bucket more easily than a man who never saw or heard of any thing like a lever. But how much more easily would the former have learnt to make the well-pole than he learnt to construct the splitting-mill? I have not any difficulty in believing that a man who has spent five or six years in attaining the Latin language will learn English grammar more easily than a man who has spent that time in learning a trade of some sort. But, what is to make up for the loss of these five or six years? A thorough knowledge of the Latin language might shorten the work of learning English two or three months; and am I, for the sake of saving two or three months, to be at the expense of schooling for my son for five years, besides subjecting him to tyranny and torment all the while, breaking down his spirit, cramping his genius, and, perhaps, destroying his health? I want my son (suppose) to make a good, neat, strong, plain coat, fit for a sensible man's use, and to be in use every-day; and, in order to effect this object, shall I be fool enough to send him to some outlandish taylor to learn to make one of those fringed and tassled and laced and frogged and furbelowed monkey things that the sycophant crew wear to court? No: be sure he will know how to make the plain coat after he has learnt to make this apish thing, for there is nothing but cutting and sewing in both cases: but, why not set him down to make the plain coat at once? I have heard tell of a rich mad fellow, who sent his servant maid to Paris to learn how to cook a leg of mutton and turnips; which, mad as it was,

was not much less mad than the conduct of those parents who send their sons to Latin schools in order to obtain the means of learning English Grammar, or in order to obtain knowledge of any sort.

I have now, Sir, stated to you my plan, the reasons on which it is founded, and the motives which have induced me to undertake the execution of it. As to that execution I am less anxious about perfect manner than about its effect. The reputation that can attach to it is a matter of no consequence to me. I regard the knowledge of Grammar as of a very inferior order; but, it is, nevertheless, necessary knowledge; the communication of it, as far as I am able, to the persons described at the outset of this letter, I regard as a duty to my country; and in the confident hope, that you, in spite of

Sidmouth's dungeon, will live to witness some of its good effects, I remain

Your sincere friend,

And most obedient servant,

WM. COBBETT.

Mr. NILES, in his paper of the 13th of this month, has addressed a letter to me, to write which was, he says, determined on while he was "*drinking his coffee* that very evening." For *coffee* read *grog*, and Mr. NILES's letter stands in no need of apology from him, or of answer from me. But if, unfortunately, Mr. NILES should insist, that coffee really was his only beverage of that evening, how ashamed will he be of his conduct before this day six months; or, how destitute will he prove himself to be of all feelings of shame!

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